



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Supreme Court Committee Provides Guidance to Judges on Attending Political Fundraising or Endorsement Events

Committee advises judges on when political activities might create the appearance of bias

SAN FRANCISCO—The California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) has adopted a formal advisory opinion providing guidance to judges and judicial candidates to assist them in determining the types of activities they may engage in at political fundraising or endorsement events.

In CJEO [Formal Opinion 2016-008](#), the committee examines the language of canon 5 in the California Code of Judicial Ethics, which generally prohibits any political activities that create the appearance of political bias and specifically prohibits public endorsements and personal solicitations for nonjudicial candidates or political parties. Canon 5 also permits activities concerning the law and legal system improvement, so long as those activities are consistent with the code, including the prohibitions on political activities that create the appearance of political bias. Given these prohibitions and permissions, the committee provides guidance to judges on how to decide whether to (1) attend, (2) speak, or (3) appear as the guest of honor or receive an award at a political fundraising or endorsement event.

CJEO Formal Opinion 2016-008 also advises judges who are campaigning that they may be introduced and speak on their own behalf or on behalf of another candidate for judicial office, so long as they do not commit to a position on an issue that is likely to come before the courts and they do not endorse or solicit funds for a candidate for nonjudicial office or a political organization.

Finally, the committee advises judges who have accepted a personal invitation to attend a political fundraising or endorsement event to assess the likelihood that their attendance will be known to the event organizers and possibly used to promote the event. If so, judges are advised to make reasonable efforts to ensure that their judicial title will not be used for promotion. Such

efforts may include informing promoters in advance of ethical restrictions or reviewing promotional materials.

The committee previously [invited the public to comment](#) on this advisory opinion in draft form. The [comments submitted with a waiver of confidentiality](#) are posted for public view on the CJEO website. CJEO Formal Opinion No. 2016-008 contains modifications adopted by the committee after carefully considering the comments received, including clarifications of the terminology, canon restrictions, and advisory measures.

CJEO is an independent committee appointed by the Supreme Court to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. CJEO was established as part of the court's constitutional responsibility to guide the conduct of judges and judicial candidates (Cal. Const., art. VI, § 18, subd. (m)). In making appointments to serve on CJEO, the court selects members of the bench with a strong background in judicial ethics and diverse courtroom experience. The current twelve CJEO members are justices, judges, a commissioner, and a retired bench officer who have served in courts of various sizes throughout the state.

CJEO publishes formal opinions, issues confidential informal opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the California Code of Judicial Ethics and other authorities (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(e)(1)). CJEO acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, and all other entities (rule 9.80(b)).

For more information about CJEO, visit the [CJEO website](#) and [view the members' page](#), call toll-free at 1-855-854-5366, or email Judicial.Ethics@jud.ca.gov.

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The Supreme Court established the Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinions (CJEO) to help inform the judiciary and the public concerning judicial ethics topics. (Cal. Rules of Court, [rule 9.80](#).) CJEO publishes formal advisory opinions, issues confidential written opinions, and provides oral advice on proper judicial conduct pursuant to the [California Code of Judicial Ethics](#) and other authorities. In providing its advisory opinions, the committee acts independently of the Supreme Court, the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Judicial Council, and all other entities. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.80(b).) The Supreme Court is responsible for adopting the Code of Judicial Ethics, which guides the conduct of judges on and off the bench (Cal. Const., Art. VI, § 18, subd. (m).)